



Learning Paper

March 2024

CASE STUDIES

The case studies provide insights for future policymakers implementing the MLUF. Each case study is referenced by key themes for ease of access: the case studies can be found in their original context in the three MLUF Learning Papers on [Leadership](#) aspects of the MLUF, on [Scope and Scale](#), and on the [Evidence and Data](#) aspects.

Exmoor National Park – how interoperability can make a difference

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Clinton Devon Estates – appetite for a joined-up approach

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Westcountry Rivers Trust – regulatory bodies can create space for leadership to take the right actions

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Connecting the Culm – the value of a shared evidence base

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Fenland Soil – peat mapping project in Cambridgeshire – data creation, ground truthing and local knowledge

Multifunctional Land Use Framework Action Research: Case Study Collection

This practitioner case study collection is collated from FFCC’s action research into the Multifunctional Land Use Framework (MLUF) during our pilot testing process in Devon and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority.

Through these pilots we wanted to understand how a MLUF could help decision-making at the county, or ‘larger than local’ level.

In Devon, funded by the Environment Agency and the Geospatial Commission, we worked with leaders across the county to understand how a MLUF could be used on the ground by people working to balance the land use demands of flood risk and resilience, water quality, food production, nature recovery and housing development.

In Cambridgeshire, funded by the Geospatial Commission and WWF, we worked with county-wide stakeholders to explore how a MLUF could help local leaders manage competing pressures on land.

We took a developmental evaluation approach to the project, which meant adapting to new findings as they emerged, and following at times divergent evolutions of the action research projects in each county. The process generated case studies – both as part of the pilots and already operating on the ground – which illustrate the principles and ways of working of the MLUF approach, and demonstrate how these foundations can support effective action on the ground. The evidence concerning MLUF-style components gleaned from these local level examples illustrates the dynamic relationship between bottom-up and top-down forces that any MLUF approach will need to address in order to be successful.

For a broad overview of FFCC’s work on the MLUF, please see our [2023 report](#) and the Rough Guide resources on the FFCC website.

Case study: Exmoor National Park – how interoperability can make a difference

Key Themes: Strategic scale; Defra objectives; Local vision; National Parks

MLUF Principles & Ways of Working: Outward & future-focused; Strategic & Granular

Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) have a variety of scales to consider when thinking about land use within Exmoor National Park. ENPA produces a management plan entitled 'Partnership Plan' to convey that it exists for the place and all its stakeholders, to cover the whole park. As a National Park Authority, it is the planning authority for Exmoor, so considers applications at a granular scale through the lens of the NPPF as well as writing the Local Plan. The ENPA also owns roughly 7% of the park (nearly 5000 hectares) so is directly responsible for decision-making for that land.

As it lies across two counties, Devon and Somerset, the park faces challenges in terms of differing county approaches (which are sometimes also opportunities). In this context a Multifunctional Land Use Framework holds the potential to support the ENPA in a number of ways. Currently, Defra sets out the goals it wants the national parks to achieve in pursuance of its overarching National Park purposes. A Multifunctional Land Use Framework could be a way of coalescing organisations around Defra's specific outcomes for the National Park.

Such alignment needs to exist at both the granular and strategic scale. At the granular scale this looks like ENPA working with farm businesses and communities to support the achievement of outcomes in the Exmoor Vision. At the strategic scale ENPA, regulators and strategic collaborators need to work to define the shared responsibility stakeholders have for maximising the outcomes the National Park is pursuing, both within its boundaries, and to outcomes outside of the park in both counties.

Case study: Clinton Devon Estates – appetite for a joined-up approach

Key Themes: Holistic approach; Stewardship; Sustainability; Land Use Board

MLUF Principles & Ways of Working: Supporting multifunctionality; Leadership commitment

Clinton Devon Estates is in a healthy position when it comes to meeting the multiple pressures that exist on land. Long standing tenant farmers, a strong central team working to bring the estates 2030 vision into being, and a wealth of data that they are utilising to support decision-making. In recognition of the increasing importance of land use decision-making, the estate have established a land use programme and board. For decisions that have a significant impact on the land use, the board will go through a process of deliberation using a set of principles that speak to the objectives of the estate and consider their impact on those around them. This process is similar to the Multifunctional Land Use Framework process FFCC has identified.

The estate is seeking to balance stewardship with economic and environmental sustainability to ensure that any changes it does make to land use are considered thoroughly and specifically with multifunctionality in mind.

By taking the constituent parts of a Multifunctional Land Use Framework; leadership, data and evidence, a forum in which to bring these two together, along with principles and questions that structure interactions within that forum, the estate is leading the way in understanding how this holistic approach can benefit their decision-making.

Case study: Westcountry Rivers Trust – regulatory bodies can create space for leadership to take the right actions

Key Themes: Collaborative working; Regulators creating the context for innovation

MLUF Principles & Ways of Working: Integrative; Evidence Based

Laurence Couldrick, CEO of Westcountry Rivers Trust, and a member of the Devon leadership group, recounted his experience of the impact of an Ofwat/Defra decision in the late 2000's. At the time water planning and investment was just within the 5-year Water Industry Natural Environment Programme timeframe, but Ofwat asked water companies to assess their assets over a 25-year horizon. Additionally, Ofwat/Defra permitted water companies to invest in third party land, effectively telling water companies you don't have to own the asset to manage the asset. This changed how the sector was able to operate, opening up new space for collaborative working and starting the path towards a much more integrative approach and catchment management. The decision led to water companies being able to draw from a greater pool of experience, research and resource by working with partners.

A lot of work has been done since that time on the benefits of Nature Based Solutions and Natural Flood Management, which are now integral approaches to water planning. The advances of this more sustainable approach were made possible through these collaborative relationships that were brought about by the sector taking a lead on setting the conditions in which innovation could flourish. Laurence asked, could Ofwat now mandate that plans are now not only integrative across water planning but take into account other sectors e.g. food and energy security?

Similarly, there is a role for regulators from other sectors to play in providing the enabling conditions within their policies to promote cross-sector collaboration. The Multifunctional Land Use Framework process could meet the needs of this approach by providing a place for the data and evidence to be considered deliberatively, creating shared outcomes that have built on the opportunities and grappled with the trade offs.

Case study: Connecting the Culm – the value of a shared evidence base

Key Themes: River catchment; Co-creation; Visioning; Financial incentives; Ground-truthing; Generational knowledge

MLUF Principles & Ways of Working: Adaptive & Resilient; Evidence based

Connecting the Culm (CtC) project is working with nature and local communities, to help make the River Culm and its catchment better for wildlife and people, and more resilient to flood and drought. The team running the project were key members of our pilot. The project has used co-creation and visioning approaches to set an ambition for the catchment in 2050, and a blueprint plan of how to get there. To support them to fulfil this ambition they commissioned a hydrological map of the catchment and used this to inform their integrated catchment model. This detailed spatial data is used to identify Potential Areas for Improved Resilience (PAIRs) that should be focused on to deliver Nature Based Solutions (NBS) that support the achievement of the outcomes that have been collectively set.

As an example of how this works in practice, in the Kentisbeare sub-catchment (13 km²), the team used a virtual whiteboard (Covid restrictions were still in place) to lay out the best available data & evidence, which included the PAIRs. Using this shared evidence base to underpin their conversation, they facilitated a

discussion amongst practitioners and specialists about the optimal land use in the right locations (using a set of principles and logic), in order to deliver ecosystem services (in this case flood, drought, biodiversity, heritage and carbon). The highest priority areas were refined based on spatial data, knowledge from practitioners working on the ground and where existing relationships increased the likelihood of action taking place. This is then ground-truthed to ensure that nothing has been missed or misrepresented by the data – and to gain a clear understanding of the multifunctional benefits that the change can offer, for instance former catch meadows being reinstated that could help improve infiltration, attenuate flows, conserve the historic features, restore wildlife habitat and catch sediment.

This work is linked to financial incentives for the landowner/land manager in order to make a financial case for change alongside the ecological and social factors that will play a role in the final decision. It's key that landowners and land managers are seen as partners in this process. Lucy Jefferson, the CtC Catchment Officer, said "Landowners and managers can tell you exactly how a river functions over time. And if we're talking about rivers going back to a more natural state, many of the longstanding landowners know what that looks like. They know where the orchards and hedges used to be, and when they were taken out. They know things you can't get from a historical map or data set. It's generational knowledge."

This case study is a clear example of how a shared evidence base is a critical element in supporting decision makers and organisations need to come together to discuss and plan for the future. The process in the Culm focuses on the granular detail necessary to make concrete decisions on the ground. It largely mirrors the steps of the process that are necessary at a strategic scale to balance needs across nature, agriculture, built development, transport, energy and health and wellbeing. A strategic Multifunctional Land Use Framework can support the development and implementation of projects like Connecting the Culm –

giving both landowners and organisations/institutions increased access to relevant, quality data and analysis that supports multifunctional land use decision-making.

Case study: Fenland Soil – peat mapping project in Cambridgeshire – data creation, ground truthing and local knowledge

Key Themes: Nature Based Solutions; Financial Incentives; Peat; Soil mapping

MLUF Principles & Ways of Working: Locally responsive; Strategic & Granular

The lowland agricultural peats of the fens have been the subject of much discussion of late, with the government's Lowland Agricultural Peat Taskforce having recently issued its report. There are many who advocate rewetting these areas in order to protect the valuable carbon store and realise the carbon sequestration and wildlife potential represented by rewetting deep peats, while others point to the importance of lowland agricultural peat to food production, especially to the horticulture sector with 33% of UK field vegetables produced in Fens.

Against the backdrop of this debate, researchers from Fenland Soil and National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) have highlighted the urgent need to update our peat soil maps and have been working with farmers to produce detailed soil maps of their farms. Conventionally farmed peats can erode at a rate of up to 2cm a year, so soil mapping rapidly becomes outdated in peatland areas. It is important to know where areas of deep peat remain because it is environmentally harmful to rewet areas of wasted peat, also known as skirt fen, as this is associated with higher methane emissions. Those looking to rewet parts of the fens based on outdated maps, could be rewetting unsuitable areas and causing environmental harm.

Farmers have by far the best knowledge of the current state of peatlands, and this knowledge is not held by anyone else.

Fenland Soil and NIAB researchers engaged with farmers to map their soil types, inviting farmers to draw their different soil types onto maps of their farm. This approach generated very intricate soil maps showing in field variations in soil type. Fenland Soil and NIAB are now working to create opportunity maps for rewetting based on this newly recorded soil data. They are hoping that this approach can be adopted more widely in the fens.

Conclusion

The case studies show everyday examples of existing activities that demonstrate components of a MLUF already in action. Multiple approaches, following the MLUF Principles and Ways of Working, are already in place to support the achievement of national and local targets and ensure better land use decisions for all and these could be the foundation of a strong MLUF.

This case study collection is one of four setting out the findings from our pilots. The series is available on [A *Rough Guide to the Multifunctional Land Use Framework*](#), which brings together learnings, discussions and tried and tested ideas about a MLUF.

To find out more about FFCC's work and join the MLUF Practitioner Community, contact georgie.barber@ffcc.co.uk